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SUPERVISORS RIDLEY-THOMAS AND YAROSLAVSKY REQUEST TRANSITIONAL FUNDING FOR BLACK INFANT HEALTH PROGRAM

LOS ANGELES – At the request of Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Zev Yaroslavsky, the Board of Supervisors today supported urging the First 5 LA Commission to favorably consider continued investment in the Black Infant Health Program in its efforts to address the high rate of infant mortality among African American families.

By approving the Supervisors' request, the Board instructed the County's Chief Executive Office to send a letter to each member of the First 5 LA Commission expressing its support for continued First 5 LA funding at its current level. The funding is scheduled to sunset in late June.

"Since 1989, the program has proven to be effective and has successfully reduced infant mortality rates among program participants," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said, adding that the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's data shows that since 2000, the program has seen a 50% reduction in the number of low-birth weight babies born to clients.

On August 18, 2009, the Board unanimously voted to request that First 5 LA Commission support Los Angeles County's Black Infant Health Program after it experienced devastating state budget cuts.

In September 2009, First 5 LA voted to enter into agreements with DPH, the City of Long Beach Department of Public Health and the City of Pasadena Department of Health, for a total of \$1,161,986 to prevent interruption of critical services.

Last year's vote by the First 5 LA Commission was not unprecedented as other counties First 5 Commissions have also supported their local Black Infant Health Programs.

For example, the First 5 Commission of Kern County granted its County's Black Infant Health Program three years of funding. Similar financial investments in the Black Infant Health Program have been made by the First 5 Commissions of Solano, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and San Diego Counties.

The County may have an opportunity to maintain its current level of services in the next fiscal year. On May 13, 2010, the First 5 LA Commission will consider a motion to provide another year of transition funding at the current level for the three Black Infant Health Programs in Los Angeles County that would coincide with extensions it granted for its Healthy Births Initiative grants.

The Board also directed DPH to use First 5 LA funds received as a match to draw down additional federal funds to support the effort and urged the CEO's office to support legislative efforts to reinstate State General Funds for the program.

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